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It is therefore my intention to put you in possession of all the suggestions which were offered to the Committee, with my comments upon them; and if you have felt the least disappointment at the result of our labours, you must not consider me individually responsible for it. The draft of my Report was read to the Committee on Saturday, July 9th, and taken into consideration on the following Thursday; and it was perfectly open to any other member to have moved some resolution by way of amendment to that Report, if the conclusion to which I had arrived on a consideration of the evidence were unsatisfactory to him, and if he was of opinion that the evidence would warrant his proposing some specific measure of relief.

I proceed therefore to explain my views upon this interesting subject; leaving you to draw your own conclusions from the absence of any recommendation; which I attribute, not to any want of consideration on the part of the Committee for the interests of the farmer, but entirely to the impossibility of advancing any proposition which would meet with the concurrence of a majority of its members.

In most of the petitions which were presented to the House this session, the pressure of Tithe, and those local burthens to which the agricultural interest is liable, such as, County Rate, Highway Rate, and Poor Rate, formed the great subject of complaint; and the attention both of Government and Parliament having been particularly directed to these points since the report of the Committee in 1833, it may be useful to consider, in the first instance, what steps have been taken towards the alleviation of these acknowledged grievances.

Tithe, from its tendency to check improvement, has operated most prejudicially to the interests of agriculture. But a bill has just passed the legislature for its permanent commutation; tithe in kind has been abolished, and it will henceforth be charged on the estate of the landowner; and the farmer, having once made his arrangements with his landlord, may invest any portion of his capital in the improvement of his farm, with the certainty that he will derive the full benefit of its expenditure.

The County Rate has already been the subject of enquiry before the Committees of the Houses of Lords and Commons, and as a member of the latter Committee, and also of a Commission, appointed to consider especially what reductions can be made in that portion of the rate which is expended in prosecutions, I may state, with confidence, there is every prospect, when our recommendations can be carried into effect, of this Tax being so far reduced, that its pressure will be but lightly felt by the agriculturist.

The cost of maintaining the highways, whether contributed in kind or in money, has hitherto been borne, in much too large a proportion, by the Agriculturists. The object of the Act of Parliament, which passed during the last session, is to distribute that burthen more equitably between all classes of the community; and I have no doubt, when the provisions of the act come into full operation, and a better system of road Management is introduced, the roads will be materially improved, whilst the expense of maintaining them will be considerably lessened.

The Poor Rate has hitherto been a great burthen to the farmer, in those districts in which agriculture has been depressed from other causes. Whenever an opportunity offered for obtaining satisfactory evidence of the working of the new Poor Law Bill, the Committee did not fail to take advantage of it; and it is gratifying to learn, from various parts of the country, that the effects of this measure have exceeded the anticipations of its most sanguine advocates. Admitting the last eighteen months to have been a period peculiarly favorable to the trial of this experiment; owing to the low price of provisions, and the great demand for labour, the saving under the head of poor rate has been far greater than could have been expected in so short a time, and if any portion of this amount has been spent in additional labour for the cultivation of the soil, a double benefit, must have ensued both to the labourer and his employer.

But the moral effects of this important measure will be yet more beneficial to the agriculturist than the pecuniary relief: the agricultural labourer is already aware, that under the new system of administering relief, the parish must, in future, be his last, instead of his first resort, and there has, consequently, arisen in his mind, a strong desire to find work, and remain in the service of his employer: this has encreased the industry, and improved the conduct of the labourers, and their services have in consequence become far more valuable to the farmer, than the reluctant labour of those, who, from the certainty of obtaining ample assistance from the parish funds, had scarcely any stimulus to exertion.

Notwithstanding this diminution in these local burthens, it appears from the concurrent testimony of many witnesses, examined before the Agricultural Committee, that in various parts of England the farmer's capital is gradually sinking, and that at the low price of wheat which prevailed a few months ago, it is not possible for him to continue the profitable occupation of his farm. There is every reason, I hope, for believing that the pressure of this distress is in a great measure confined to the occupiers of cold tenacious soils, and to those farmers who rely upon their wheat crop as their main source of profit.

In connection with the low price of wheat, I must here mention the great change which has taken place in the agriculture of this country within the last few years. In some counties extensive tracts of wold, fen and heath land, heretofore considered unfit for cultivation, have been redeemed; in others old grass lands have been ploughed up and that which was formerly sown with flax or hemp, has been devoted to wheat, and by the introduction of the turnip system of husbandry, the poor light lands are made to produce wheat at a less cost to the cultivator than the more tenacious soils, and thus the clay lands, which were considered the ancient wheat lands of the country, have to enter into competition with the lighter soils, and are no longer able to maintain their superiority. Whilst this addition has been made to the productive soils in the kingdom, its acreable produce has been materially increased by the operation of draining, and the employment of artificial manures; and to these causes, coupled with the circumstance that an unusual breadth of

wheat was sown in 1833, 1834, and that its average weight and consequently its capability to produce human food has increased under the influence of three unusually fine seasons, may be attributed that abundant supply which has produced so remarkable a depression in its price. Some witnesses have attempted to account for this excess by importations from Ireland and Scotland, and by a decrease in the consumption of wheat by the labouring classes, in consequence of the increased growth of potatoes. It appears, however, from a return which was presented to the Committee, that on an average of the three years ending January 1833, 553,274 quarters of wheat were annually imported from Ireland; and that on an average of the three years ending January, 1836, 761,827 quarters were imported from that country, making an excess in the average supply of the last three years of only 208,553 quarters. The imports from Scotland in the three years ending in January, 1833, were, on an average, 48,508 quarters of wheat, and in the three years ending January 1836, only 23,622; whilst the quantity of wheat shipped coastwise from England to Scotland, on an average of the last three years, has been 31,202, being an excess of 14,972 above the average of the three preceding years.

As there has been little or no importation of wheat from abroad during the last three years, it is evident that our markets have been mainly supplied by wheat of English growth, and by referring to the number of quarters sold in those towns whence the returns regulating the averages are sent to the Board of Trade, we find, comparing the average amount

of quarters sold in 1829, 1830 and 1831, with those sold in 1832, 1833, 1834, there is an excess of 713,011 quarters of the latter period over the former; and although there may be doubts whether this return is strictly accurate with respect to the exact number of quarters of wheat sold in any one market, it is considered by some of the best informed witnesses to present a fair measure of comparison between the quantities sold in all the towns included in this return at any two given periods since the passing of the last Corn law. There does not appear to be sufficient ground for the supposition that potatoes are used to any considerable extent, as a substitute for wheat bread, by the labouring classes; there can be no doubt, therefore, that the late depression in the price of wheat has arisen almost entirely from a superabundant supply.

The abundant crops of wheat of the last three years, may in some measure have made up for the deficiency in price, but wherever that has not been the case, the consequence to the cultivator of heavy soils, where it is the custom to grow wheat after a fallow, and where the fixed charges upon the land, such as rent, rates, &c., for two years are thrown upon that crop, must be ruinous. It is not therefore a matter of astonishment, that those farmers who are unfortunately placed under these circumstances, should be loud in their complaints of agricultural distress, and it is only to be regretted that they have been taught to look to parliament for that relief which can only be obtained by a reliance on their own resources, and by an improved system of cultivation.

In some districts, and more particularly in the case of farmers of small capital, distress has been aggravated by a continuance of high rents, and it is matter of deep regret that owing to the expectations held out by the Corn Law of 1815, that permanent high prices could be obtained by legislative enactment, neither landlords nor tenants were prepared for that satisfactory adjustment of rent which ought to have been made at the termination of the war. There is evidently no want of sympathy on the part of the landowners for the condition of their tenantry. Reductions in rent have been made from time to time, limited as was supposed by the necessities of the tenant; whereas, if considerable abatements had been made at once at that period, less upon the whole would have been required, the capital of the tenant would not have been diminished, and much of the present distress might have been averted.

It has generally been supposed that excessive rents are only injurious to tenants under lease; but a moment's reflection will show that a tenant at will, who, owing to a fall in prices, cannot realize the same amount for his stock as when he entered upon his farm, is quite as dependent upon his landlord as a tenant on lease, and that he will rather submit to the payment of too high a rent, in the hope of a recurrence of high prices, than hazard the loss of a considerable portion of his capital by a sale. Whenever rent begins to encroach upon the capital of the tenant, it becomes impossible for him to attempt any improvement on his farm; nor can he employ the labour necessary for its due cultivation; the land by over-cropping

becomes gradually less productive, and is at last reduced to such a state of exhaustion, that it will scarcely repay the expense of cultivation, without leaving any surplus for rent or profit.

These observations are only applicable to those cases where farms have continued in the occupation of the same tenants at war rents, where the land has not been permanently improved by an expenditure of capital either on the part of the landlord or tenant, or where it has been taken under the expectation that an higher average price of wheat would be maintained than has been realized under the corn laws of 1828. They will not, of course, apply to a large and most respectable class of agriculturists who farm their own estates. If these individuals have been led by the high prices of agricultural produce during the war to adopt a more expensive style of living, if they have mortgaged their estates, or contracted engagements which they are no longer able to fulfil, their case is altogether without remedy. But if, in common with the great mass of the tenantry of this country, they are suffering merely from that competition to which I have before adverted, or from the late (I may almost say accidentally) low price of wheat, their distress is merely temporary.

The evidence which the Agricultural Committee received from Scotland is abundantly sufficient to prove with what success the cultivation of the soil can be carried on, even at low prices, by an improved system of management: and I alluded to it not for the purpose of drawing an invidious dis-

inction between the farmers of the two countries, but to show with what beneficial results capital and skill can be applied to land, especially where the occupying tenant is relieved from the payment of tithe in kind.

The following Statement, derived from the evidence of both English and Scotch farmers, is deserving of attention:

NAME of WITNESS.	Rent, Tithe, and Parochial Burthens.	Annual Average Expence per Acre.	TOTAL.	Quality of Land, estimated by average Produce per Acre in Wheat.	
<i>English.</i>	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.		
Brickwell ..	1 15 0	3 19 0	5 14 0	30	
Rolfe	1 11 6	3 13 6	5 5 0	24	
Cox	1 15 0	4 2 2	5 17 2	30	
<i>Scotch.</i>					
Hope	2 3 9	2 12 0	4 15 9	29	Mr. Hope's rent is a corn rent, calculated with wheat at 50s. per quarter. Messrs. Hope, Bell & Robertson have not only been farming profitably for the last three years, but have spent large sums in furrow draining.
Bell	1 8 8	2 0 7	3 9 3	28	
Robertson ..	1 19 0	2 16 0	4 5 0	30	
<i>English.</i>					
Bennett ..	0 16 0	1 16 10	2 12 10	18	Tithe Free.
Crowther ..	1 2 0	2 8 7	3 10 7	22	

Although the rent paid by the Scotch farmer appears in some instances to bear a higher proportion to the quality of the land than that paid by the English farmers, the difference in the cost of cultivation is far more remarkable; and it will be seen, by an attentive perusal of the evidence given by all the

Scotch witnesses, that they turn their attention to the breeding, fattening, and general management of stock to a much greater extent than is usually done by the English farmer. The productive powers of the land are increased by the additional quantity of manure thus raised, and it suffers less exhaustion by the less frequent recurrence of the grain crop: and to this circumstance their comparative prosperity may in a great measure be attributed. Where the same practice prevails in England, as will be collected from the evidence of Messrs. Bennett and Crowther, it is attended with an equally favourable result.

It appears that the practice which prevails in Scotland, of letting farms on a long lease * and at a corn rent, has tended very much to encourage agricultural improvement in that country; and a corn rent must be particularly favourable to tenants in those seasons, when crops are sufficiently abundant to lower the market price of corn. In years of scarcity, on the other hand, they cannot be of equal advantage to the farmer; and, perhaps, the most perfect system would be, to allow a portion of the rent to vary with the price of that description of corn which forms the ordinary produce of the farm, and the remainder to be a fixed money payment.

In many parts of England there exists a strong prejudice against long leases, and in those districts there does not appear to be any want of confidence between the landlords and tenantry, as farms are frequently held by one family for generations without a lease. But although, in cases where no ex-

* Usually for 19 or 21 Years.

traordinary outlay is required on the part of the tenant, leases may not be requisite; it must be conceded, that without the security which they necessarily afford, a tenant would hardly be justified in making any large investment of capital in the permanent improvement of his farm; and on that account leases are well deserving of encouragement in those parts of England where the land is impoverished by previous bad management, or where it requires extensive draining to make it productive.

On the subject of draining the Agricultural Committee received very interesting evidence both from England and Scotland. In Kent and Sussex, and several other counties, the clay soils have been much improved by the use of Pearson's draining plough. But the system of thorough draining adopted in Scotland is very far superior, and is an improvement well worthy the imitation of English farmers. The most astonishing effects, however, appear to have been produced by a new agricultural implement, the invention of Mr. Smith, of Deenston, near Stirling, called the sub-soil plough. This machine is a necessary accompaniment to draining, but when that is done effectively, it seems calculated to render the most sterile and unproductive soil fertile and profitable. There is no difficulty more fatal to the practical farmer than that of cultivating a thin shallow soil with a stiff retentive sub-soil. Whatever pains may be taken with the tillage of the former—however expensive the dressing which may be used in its cultivation—the nature of the sub-soil will always counteract its beneficial effects. Many persons have endeavoured, by trenching, to

obviate this difficulty; but where the sub-soil is of that sterile nature, and requires exposure to the atmosphere for so long a period to make it productive, few farmers have been found bold enough to repeat the experiment. Mr. Smith's most ingenious invention (which is admirably described in his evidence, to which I beg to refer you for a more complete explanation of its principle,) by breaking the sub-soil without bringing it to the surface, renders it pervious both to air and water. The same chemical changes which take place in a fallow, owing to its exposure to the action of the wind and rain, are thus brought into operation in the sub-soil, whilst the upper is in the ordinary course of cropping, and when, after a few years, by a greater depth of ploughing, the sub-soil is mixed with the upper, it is found to be so completely changed in its nature, as to be capable of producing every description of corn. The advantages of this system of husbandry are so apparent, that no farmer will be at a loss to appreciate the merit of the invention. I believe it to be quite as important an improvement in the management of clay lands as the introduction of the turnip system has been with reference to the light soils; and, as the experiment has been tried for twelve years, and with uniform success, I cannot but anticipate its ultimate adoption in those districts of England, where, from the cold retentive nature of the soil, the greatest extent of agricultural distress has hitherto prevailed, and where draining is essential to preserve them in a state of cultivation.

The principal suggestions for the improvement of agricultural interests offered to the Committee, were;—the introduction

of Poor Laws into Ireland; the allowing farmers permission to malt their own barley for consumption on their farms, free of duty; and a reduction of the malt duty. The remission of the duty on foreign seeds, was also proposed as a measure of relief, in particular districts; but the effect of such an alteration of the law, would be to derange the culture in many counties where such produce is raised, and where it furnishes, at this moment, a great demand for labour.

The condition of the poor in Ireland is so intimately connected with the state of its agriculture, that the latter has formed a distinct branch of the enquiry assigned to the Irish Poor Law Commissioners; and for this reason, the Committee did not consider it necessary to examine many witnesses from that country. It appears, however, that the tenantry of Ireland has not retrograded within the last three years, and that the condition of the larger farmers is decidedly ameliorated; considerable improvements have been made in the breed of sheep and cattle, by crossing them with the best English stock; and the landlords have exerted themselves in draining and reclaiming bog land. In some parts of Ireland, in proportion as the farmers have become wealthy, they have given up tillage, laying down their land in pasture; and the extreme humidity of the climate offers every inducement to the adoption of this change of system.

In the counties of Armagh, Tyrone, and Cavan, according to the evidence of Mr. Blacker, who is the manager of very considerable property in those districts, the condition of th

tenantry has been greatly improved. This may be attributed in a great measure to the substitution of the flax for the wheat crop, and to the high price of flax, owing to the failure of that crop on the continent last year. It appears to have been a common practice in the north of Ireland to cultivate a succession of corn crops until the land became exhausted, and then to allow it to remain in grass until by a certain degree of rest it had regained its fertility; but this practice has happily given way to a more systematic rotation of crops, owing to the encouragement given to the tenantry to rely more upon the green crop and the profits of stock, than on the cultivation of corn. It is impossible, however, that Agriculture as a system can be carried on in Ireland until the farms are consolidated, and provided with buildings necessary to the successful management of land.

In reply to those persons who complain that the want of Poor Laws in Ireland gives an undue advantage to the Irish farmer, who is thereby entitled to undersell them in the English market; and that owing to the miserable condition of the labouring classes less wheat is consumed there in proportion to the population, and a greater surplus remains for exportation to this country; it may be observed, that even supposing the absence of poor rate, not to be made up for by an increase of rent, the Irish farmer has many difficulties to contend with to which the English farmer is a stranger; and, however desirable on other grounds the introduction of Poor Laws into Ireland may be, it by no means follows that its effects would be to diminish the supplies of corn or cattle from that

country; when the natural fertility of its soil is more fully developed by a judicious application of capital in an improved system of husbandry.

With respect to the second proposition: the privilege of malting barley free of duty does not appear, even according to the calculations of its most intelligent advocates, of sufficient importance to render its adoption expedient; at the risk of rendering the collection of the revenue less secure, as shewn by the testimony of Mr. Hetherington; to say nothing of the expense which the employment of a great many additional officers would entail upon the country, and the dissatisfaction which such an inquisitorial supervision on the part of the Excise would naturally excite, which are in themselves insurmountable objections to the trial of the experiment.

It is impossible not to admit that any reduction of the Malt duty, which would cause an increased demand for barley, would operate most beneficially on the interests of agriculture. It would not only encourage draining, and the improvement of clay-land, from which most important results may be anticipated, but it would check the over-cultivation of wheat, lead to a better rotation of crops, and also to a greater reliance on the profits of stock. The reduction of the malt duty is, however, so completely interwoven with the question of the Corn Laws, that I should not have felt justified in suggesting any proposition with reference to this important subject, were it not for the evidence of some of the best informed persons connected with the corn trade, and some of the most intelligent

agricultural witnesses, who agreed in recommending an alteration in the existing Corn Laws.

It appears from the Fifteenth Report of the Commissioners of Excise Enquiry, confirmed to a great extent by the evidence of Mr. Dunlop, formerly one of the most extensive distillers in Scotland, and now residing at Wandsworth, that with a lower rate of duty, a much greater quantity of malt would be used in the manufacture of beer and spirits; that many of the oppressive regulations which at present interfere with the process of malting might be dispensed with; that an increased quantity of barley, now fraudulently malted, would be brought to charge, and that the revenue could, at no distant period, regain all that it might at first lose by the reduction of duty. It is therefore well deserving of consideration, whether, if greater facilities could be given to the trade of the maltster, there is not every reason to expect that (provided the price of barley was not enhanced) the price of malt would be reduced below the amount of duty remitted; and barley of an inferior quality would thus be malted for the purpose of feeding cattle; which is an advantage not calculated upon by the Commissioners.

The number of quarters of malt made in the year ending January 5, 1836, were,

In England	4,509,857
Scotland	557,444
Ireland	294,205
	<hr/>
	5,361,506

Allowing for a small increase in bulk during the process of manufacture, it would require 5,000,000 quarters of barley to produce the present amount of revenue, at 20s. 8d. per quarter; and of course the same number of additional quarters to produce the same amount of revenue at 10s. 4d. per quarter. The Commissioners, however, have stated with great justice, that if this demand for barley should tend to increase its price, the increased consumption which they anticipate as likely to result from a reduction of duty would be counteracted. This can only be obviated by an extensive importation of foreign barley; and as the present price of barley appears to be sufficiently high to afford the farmer a fair remuneration for the capital employed in its cultivation, it is equally important to him, as well as to the public, that the scale of duties on the import of foreign barley should be so regulated as to admit the supply necessary for so increased a consumption, without raising its price above the present level. In the year 1831, when the average price of barley was 38s. per quarter, and the rate of duty 6s. 4d., less than 370,000 quarters were entered for home consumption; and the effect of that demand for barley was to raise the price of it, at Hamburgh and Dantzic to 22s. and 18s. 4d.; 14s. 7d. and 14s. 1d. being the average price of barley for the ten years preceding. The cost of transport, &c. at that time must have been 9s. or 10s. per quarter; and as there is always great risk in carrying barley, owing to its liability to heat during the voyage, it is not reasonable to expect that it can be brought to this country on much more favourable terms: whatever, therefore, may be the extent to which eventually the growth of barley may be increased in this country, it is evident

that during the time which it will require to improve the quality of clay lands, a considerable quantity must be imported from abroad; and if the demand is to be supplied without raising its price, it will be necessary to reduce the rate of duty at which foreign barley can be entered for home consumption.

With a view to illustrate the effect such a measure would produce upon the interests of agriculture, let us suppose that a demand is created for only 2,500,000 additional quarters of barley in England, the produce of from 600,000 to 800,000 acres; this land would necessarily be withdrawn from the cultivation of wheat; and assuming that 600,000 acres, producing at present 20 bushels of wheat per acre, to be so withdrawn, and that only in very favourable seasons (which is quite borne out by evidence), the population of this country is independent of foreign supply; it is clear that it will be necessary to import a quantity of wheat annually, never less than 1,500,000 quarters, for the consumption of this country.

Assuming, therefore, that the necessary consequence of a great increase in the demand for barley would be to induce farmers to cultivate that description of corn on the inferior soils, and to confine the growth of wheat to land of a superior quality, it would be no longer necessary to retain the same amount of duty on foreign wheat for the protection of the farmer. But the present enormous amount of the duty on malt constitutes in itself (more especially since a diminution has taken place in local taxation,) one of the principal grounds on which the British agriculturist can establish his claim to protec-

tion from foreign competition; and considering that the effect of all restriction upon foreign importation must be to raise prices at home, which is directly at variance with the interests of the consumer, it is obvious that any attempt to retain a monopoly, without the means of justifying it, would be to place in peril not only the present system of Corn Laws, but any system whatever which may be designed for the protection of the agricultural interests. But if, apart from these considerations, it were attempted to reduce the malt duty one half, without any alteration in the existing Corn Laws, the effect would be to create such a demand for barley as would raise its price (until fresh lands could be brought into barley cultivation) to an average at which foreign barley might be admitted at a mere nominal duty. The sudden admission of any great quantity of barley, at any one time, from abroad, could not be otherwise than prejudicial to the farmer; for even supposing that all that might be admitted under these circumstances should be unfit for the use of the maltster, it would be purchased by the miller and distiller, and compete, most injuriously to the interests of the producer, with the second and third rate qualities of barley; and after the price of barley had been reduced by an extension of its cultivation, that portion of the agricultural interest would alone be gainers (during, that is to say, the existence of their present leases) who grow wheat upon good soils, in whose behalf the Legislature is not called upon to interfere. On these grounds, I venture to recommend that the present scale of duties on the import of foreign corn be reduced, and one-half the malt duty remitted at the same time; a measure calculated, in my opinion, not so

much to remedy existing distress, as essentially and permanently to improve the interests of the agriculturists.

I am quite aware of the jealousy with which a proposition of this nature will be received by a numerous body of farmers; and to those gentlemen I would address myself, whilst I endeavour to shew that the Corn Law of 1828 has been a delusion, and that under an altered system, an equally high average during a series of years would in all probability be maintained. The avowed object of the Government who proposed that law was to secure a steady range of prices, varying (in wheat) from 60s. to 64s.; whereas it will be seen by a reference to the returns which have been laid before Parliament, in six years ending January 1836, the average price of wheat has not exceeded 54s. 7d.; and on an average of the last three years, 46s.; a variation in price that must have been ruinous to all farmers who have contracted engagements on the faith of the present law.

The following Table will shew the rate of duty at which corn was entered for home consumption, from 1828 to 1834, inclusive; since which period there has been no importation of foreign corn worth recording.—

DATE.	TOTAL QUANTITY Entered.	DATE of ENTRY.	RATE of DUTY.	QUANTITY entered at Lowest Duty.	QUANTITY entrd. at duty below £1. 1s.
1828..	748,749	December ...	s. d. 1 0	724,228	725,649
1829..	1,260,683	{ January and February }	1 0	502,151	1,204,027
1830..	1,494,381	{ August and September }	2 8	1,072,582	1,450,947
1831..	1,088,794	March	1 0	359,076	1,080,518
1832..	164,982	{ July, August and Sep- tember.. }	23 8	126,421	.. none.
1833..	1,004	31 8	1,004	.. none.
1834..	168	37 8	168	.. none.
Total Quars. }	4,758,761	2,785,630	4,461,141

It appears from this statement, that in the four years ending January 1832, 4,592,607 quarters were entered for consumption, out of which 2,658,037 were admitted at a duty averaging only 1s. 5d. per quarter; and that in seven years ending January 1835, the latest period to which these accounts have been completed, 4,758,761 quarters were admitted, of which only 297,620 quarters paid a duty above 21s. per quarter. Mr. Sandars, an eminent corn merchant at Liverpool, who had previously been examined at great length before the Committee, in a letter addressed to myself as Chairman, dated May 16, 1836, recommends that, "the pivot price of wheat should be reduced 10s. per quarter. As a friend to both landlord and tenant, I should rejoice to see public expectation promptly and fairly met. If no anticipatory measure be adopted, and a period of excitement and high prices should arrive, there will be hasty and proba-

bly bad legislation on the subject." In another part of the same letter he adds, "The main defect of the present law is, that though it gives moderately high, and at the same time steady prices under import, it does not prevent them going ruinously low in periods of abundance; it therefore appears to me to deserve consideration, whether at any time the duty on wheat should ever be permitted to go below 4s. or 5s. per quarter. The amount of that duty might be kept as a reserved fund for a bounty on export, when prices fell to a given low rate. If the holder of bonded wheat have the option of a shilling duty, it is manifest that when the wants of the country are imperative, he will never pay 5s.; a minimum duty of 5s. therefore will be no tax on the public, but a reduction of his profits. The objection to the average system on the grounds of frauds said to be practised would be removed by striking out London, Liverpool and Wakefield from the list of towns now making returns, and substituting a larger number of others. It is only in those three large markets that fraud has the slightest chance of being practised with impunity and success."

Nothing can be more fruitless than any attempt to ascertain what may be considered a remunerating price to the farmer. In 1814, 96s. and 80s. per quarter were considered the lowest average prices at which wheat (vide Report, Committee on Corn Laws,) could be grown. We now find that it may be grown to a profit, according to the testimony of some persons, at 40s.; and several witnesses of great intelligence concur in considering a price varying from 50s. to 56s. to be quite sufficient. Every thing however, must depend upon the skill of the farmer, the

productive quality of the soil which he cultivates, and the rent he binds himself to pay.

Were the suggestion of Mr. Sandars adopted, the probability is that an average varying from 50 to 56 might be sustained without difficulty, and if accompanied by the repeal of half the malt duty, and a certain demand created for wheat from the Continent, it is more than probable that this average would be greatly augmented; at the same time it would afford a stimulus to the manufacturing interests, insuring increased prosperity to the operative classes, and a greater consumption of all other articles of agricultural produce. But let it not be supposed that it is for the interest of the farmer that the price of corn should be very high. It is infinitely more important to him that it should be steady, with as little fluctuation as possible beyond what must always necessarily follow from the effects of favourable or unfavourable seasons, and that the labouring population should be abundantly supplied with the first necessary of life, insuring as this must do, a lower rate of wages and a better rate of profit, both to the agriculturist and the manufacturer, whose interests are indissolubly united.

The tendency of the present Corn Laws has been to raise prices unnaturally during years of import, and at the same time to expose the agriculturist to a large influx of wheat (which happened in 1831) immediately before the harvest, when the price is usually the highest; but this supply is not in the smallest degree regulated by the wants of the public; it is probably the accumulation of months, which the merchant

has been induced to withhold until it can be introduced at a mere nominal duty.

In the event of a favourable harvest succeeding a large admission of foreign corn, the farmer has to struggle against a depreciation of his produce, beyond what is the natural result of an abundant season; on the other hand, if the harvest prove unfavourable, the natural rise in price which should compensate him for the deficiency in his crop, is checked by the presence of a large quantity of foreign corn in the Home market.

If the fluctuating scale of duties be continued, and the price lowered 10s. per quarter, the duty would be fixed at 4s., when the average price of wheat was 63s., and it would so far be an approximation to a sound principle; but even with that alteration the scale of duties would be unnecessarily high.

By a reference to the prices of wheat at Dantzic and Hamburg, the former being the port whence wheat of the finest quality, and the latter whence the greatest quantity of inferior wheat is imported, it will be seen that the decennial averages were 32s.10d. and 30s.2d. respectively. If we add 7s. for the expense of freight, insurance, &c., which although below the calculation of Mr. Sandars, is above that of other experienced Corn Merchants, who appeared before the Agricultural Committee, we shall have 39s.10d. and 37s.2d. as the lowest prices at which Dantzic and Hamburg wheat could be sold in England, duty free. But the effect of a demand for wheat in this coun-

try in 1828, 1829, 1830, 1831, was to raise the price of wheat at Dantzic more than 9s., and at Hamburg more than 7s.

Prices of Wheat at Dantzic, Hamburg, and Rotterdam, during the following periods.

	<i>Dantzic.</i>		<i>Hamburg.</i>		<i>Rotterdam.</i>	
Years.	Wheat.		Wheat.		Wheat.	
	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1826	21	8	20	0	25	6
1827	22	3	26	0	39	1
1828	40	2	35	0	38	6
1829	43	10	40	0	43	11
1830	39	3	35	0	43	9
1831	45	6	41	0	52	6
1832	38	0	35	0	40	7
1833	30	0	26	0	32	7
1834	25	0	22	6	31	9
1835	22	9	21	6	29	11
	32 10 <i>dec. av.</i>		30 2 <i>dec. av.</i>		37 9 <i>dec. av.</i>	

Price of Barley at Hamburg during the same period.

Years.	Yearly Average.
1826	11s. 3d.
1827	18 0
1828	16 0
1829	16 6
1830	17 0
1831	22 0
1832	18 4
1833	14 0
1834	12 0
1835	15 0
	16 0

per quarter above the decennial average, which would give us as the prices of wheat, duty free, from those two ports, 49s. and 44s. If we look to the prices at Rotterdam, during the same period, we find a decennial average of 37s.9d. and the average of 1828, 1829, 1830, 1831, 44s.8d.

Supposing, therefore, the charges for freight, &c. to England not to exceed those to Rotterdam, we arrive precisely at the same conclusion, and it would not have required a higher duty than 10s. per quarter to have secured as high an average price as has been maintained, under the present Corn Laws, during the last six years.

The finest malting barley is brought down the Elbe from the interior of Germany to Hamburgh, whence it is exported to this country. The decennial average of barley ending with 1835 was 16s. per quarter; the price in the year 1831, the only year in which there was a considerable importation into this country, was 22s. The risk attending the transport of barley must always be considerable, and it is not too much to assume that the freight, insurance &c. will amount to more than 7s. per quarter, which will make the price, duty free, in England 29s. per quarter, whenever there is a steady demand for barley in this country, so that a fixed duty of 3s. or 4s. would be a sufficient protection against foreign competition in barley.

There are two objections which have been urged against a fixed duty which ought not to pass unnoticed: the one is, that if there were a constant demand for corn in England, it would

effect so great an encouragement to the foreign growers, that we should be exposed to an inundation of foreign corn at a price far below the present prices on the continent. The other, that in seasons of scarcity, when the price was exceedingly high, the duty could not be levied.

It is fair to conclude that the prices of corn at the outports on the continent have not been more than remunerating, or there would have been an abundant supply from the interior to have reduced them to their proper level, so that no very serious error will be committed, if our calculations are based upon the average of the continental prices at those ports for a long series of years. In seasons of scarcity it is an undoubted fact, that it would be impossible to levy a duty of 10s. per quarter if the price of corn should rise to an extravagant height; but under these circumstances it is clear that as far as the interests of the farmer are concerned, a duty would not be required, and the government might be allowed to dispense with it for a short period, under certain restrictions. The case would be a special one, for which no rule could be provided; for under ordinary circumstances, if the ports were always open at a fixed duty, corn would flow in gradually from abroad in proportion to the demand, and prevent any sudden or unnatural rise in price.

It will be collected from these observations, that my own opinion is decidedly in favour of a fixed duty; but if it were found impossible to overcome the prejudices of those who entertain other views, the nearest approximation to a fixed duty will

be the system next to be preferred; * and whatever alteration is adopted should be accompanied by a remission of at least one half the present duty on Malt.

Had the duties on foreign corn been thus regulated in 1828, we should never have experienced the high prices which prevailed in our markets in the three following years, and there would not have been the same inducement to the undue cultivation of wheat, which, coupled with the favourable nature of the harvests in subsequent years, produced so alarming a depression in its price.

It is in vain to say that with an average price, not much exceeding 50s., any considerable extent of land will cease to be cultivated; the energy and skill of the British farmer will enable him to overcome this difficulty; and as the population of the country increases, and the consumption of malt, hops, and animal food becomes greater, in proportion as the price of bread is reduced, an improved system of cultivation will be introduced, yielding a higher profit to the tenant, and a better rent to the landlord; and as the surplus population of the rural districts becomes absorbed by increased demand

* Another plan, formed somewhat after the model of the Corn Law of 1804, and possessing all the supposed advantages of a fluctuating duty, is well deserving consideration, and appears calculated to secure greater steadiness of price, viz.

When the price of Wheat is above 60s.—duty on Foreign Wheat, 5s.	
above 50s. and not above 60s.—	15s.
below 50s.—	20s.
When the price of Barley is above 30s.—duty on Foreign Barley, 2s. 6d.	
above 20s. and not above 30s.—	5s.
below 20s.—	15s.

for labour at our manufactories, the farmer will be no longer driven from the use of mechanical power in reducing the costs of cultivation, by the threats and intimidation of an unemployed peasantry.

Before I quit this subject, I should state that two corn inspectors were examined by the Committee, for the purpose of ascertaining whether an improved mode of taking the averages might not be adopted, by obliging the seller to make returns to the inspector, as well as the buyers. There does not, however, appear to be sufficient grounds for making this alteration, which would be productive of serious inconvenience, without a corresponding benefit. The proposition of Mr. Sanders, which has been already quoted, would remove all chance of fraud; but it is doubtful whether so fair an approximation to the true average price would be obtained, if the three most important markets in England were excepted from the weekly returns. The Committee also inquired into the Scotch mode of striking the fiars; but the system, upon examination, did not turn out so perfect as it had been represented to be.

It was impressed upon the Committee that it would be of infinite importance to have accurate statistical information at some of the Government offices, for instance at the Board of Trade, of the quantity of land in each parish employed in grain cultivation, stating the number of acres sown with wheat, barley, and oats, and the probable produce of the next harvest. I fully concur in this opinion; and I conceive that such a plan may be advantageously grafted on the present division of Eng-

land into parochial unions, and may also be adapted to the Scotch counties, and baronies in Ireland, and that intelligent officers could be found who might furnish this information at a comparatively trifling expence.

The publication of these returns periodically in the London Gazette, for the information of persons engaged in the corn trade, would tend to lessen speculation, and to regulate the supply according to the demand, thereby reducing those elements of fluctuation in price which are so fatal to the interests of the farmer.

Several petitions were referred to the Agricultural Committee by merchants, and others interested in the corn trade, at Liverpool and Plymouth, praying for a renewal of the "Grinding Act," (5 Geo. 4. c. 70.) or, that for every barrel of British flour exported the merchant should be entitled to a certificate, authorizing him to release, at any future time, as much foreign grain as could be liberated by the amount of duty payable on the import of a barrel of foreign flour at the time when the export was made. It appeared from the evidence of those witnesses who were examined on this subject, that America alone supplies upon an average a million barrels of flour annually to the West Indies, and South America; and that owing to the advantage the English vessels possess of back carriage when they go out for sugar and colonial produce, flour is not unfrequently sent in large quantities from America to Liverpool, for the purpose of shipment to the West Indies in British vessels. There is every probability, therefore, that

if the English merchants could compete with the Americans in the flour trade, a very large export would be made from the English ports direct to the West Indies, and especially during the winter months, when the Baltic ports are closed. There also appears to be a considerable export, annually, of biscuit and flour from Hamburgh, Dantzic, and Copenhagen, to Newfoundland; and it is found that all ships which take in their cargoes at those ports, supply themselves at the same time with beef, pork, and other provisions, and with various articles of German manufacture, all of which would be purchased in this country with great benefit to the English farmer and manufacturer, if the English merchant were enabled to make use of foreign flour in the manufacture of biscuit, or by means of a bounty to export British flour at the same price as foreign flour.

Any plan which would thus relieve the country of its surplus corn in abundant seasons, must tend to promote that steadiness of price so desirable to secure to the utmost possible extent.

Some persons, however, have objected to the renewal of the Grinding Act of 1824, owing to the supposed difficulty of ascertaining the exact quantity of flour to be returned into warehouse, which must vary in different seasons with the weight of the corn; and although fraud may be scarcely practicable, it might diminish the confidence of the farmer in the amount of protection afforded him by the Corn Law, which would in itself be a great evil. There can be no objection to corn being ground under lock, and one of the witnesses, Mr.

Frean, admitted that he was not unfavourable to that plan, although he stated that it could be done cheaper by substitution.

In my opinion, the plan suggested in the Liverpool petition might be adopted without prejudice to the agricultural interest, more especially if it were to accompany the proposed alteration in the Corn Laws. It is evident, as the flour exported will have to compete with American flour, it will not answer the purpose of the merchant to export any but the produce of the best wheat; and Mr. Sandars has justly stated, that, "It will be a bounty on exportation when prices are very low, and if that had been the law, we never should have had wheat at 36s. a quarter."

There was one other subject very frequently urged upon the attention of the Committee during the progress of this investigation.

The existence of distress in the agricultural districts was in a great measure attributed by several most respectable witnesses, to the resumption of cash payments in 1819, and to an undue contraction of the currency, which, with the exception of those years in which there was an extensive issue of one pound notes, has prevailed since that period. It was stated that wheat, when at 5s. the bushel, had attained the highest price it can be expected to command on an average of years under the present standard; that the prices of barley and other grain have been enhanced by unfavourable seasons and other

accidental circumstances; that the high price of wool is to be attributed less to the demand which has been created by the prosperous state of our manufactures, than to the rot which occurred five or six years ago, and that we must expect the prices of all other agricultural produce, at no distant period, to sink to the level of wheat. It was also asserted that the farmer is deprived of that accommodation from the country banker which he so extensively enjoyed during a depreciated currency, and is on that account less able to contend against the low price of corn, or any other untoward circumstances.

These opinions, were met by contradictory testimony, and after the most patient attention to the evidence which was adduced in their support, I was unable to arrive at the same conclusion. Whatever may have been the consequences of the Act of 1819, aggravated, as they undoubtedly were, by the sudden transition from war to peace, and by the restoration of manufactures on the continent; however seriously this extensive change in the monetary system of the country, may have affected all persons who were bound by fixed engagements, landlords with settled property, tenants under lease, and debtors of every description, these difficulties are rapidly passing away; and the only question now to decide is, whether any depreciation of the currency should be attempted, with a view to the improvement of the present condition of the agricultural classes. As far as the landlord would be affected by such a measure, it is evident that unless his rents were raised in the same proportion as the prices of all articles of consumption, he

would decidedly be a loser by the change. The occupier of the soil, if he had the good fortune to be under lease at a fixed money rent, might gain to a certain extent, although entirely at the expense of his landlord, but in no other respect would it be an advantage to him, unless with regard to those trades, which owing to the monopoly they enjoy in agricultural villages, are still enabled to maintain the prices of certain articles, which form a small portion of the outlay of the farmer, above their natural level. The costs of cultivation, and the wages of labour, would eventually rise in proportion to the extension of the circulating medium; and, were this not the case, the blow would fall with the greatest weight on the most numerous and not the least meritorious class of those engaged in agriculture, the labourers in husbandry, a consequence which must be deprecated by all persons anxious for the general welfare of the community.

It has been shown, by the most satisfactory testimony, that where a farmer is in possession of capital, whether in England, Scotland, or Ireland, he has no difficulty in obtaining pecuniary assistance; nor would it be beneficial to him, that any measure should be adopted, which would afford encouragement to bankers to grant more liberal accommodation on inadequate security. This question, however, has been so long settled, that it cannot again be entertained without serious danger to every interest in the State; and, it is impossible for one moment to suppose that the Legislature would sanction an alteration, which would derange all the existing contracts in the country, more especially at a time when, although the agricul-

tural interest is partially depressed, trade and manufactures are flourishing, the labouring classes prosperous and well employed, and enjoying a greater command over the comforts and necessities of life, than at any former period. It is true, that it might lessen in some degree the weight of taxation, but this relief would not be enjoyed exclusively by the farmer, and could only be purchased at the expense of the public creditor, and at the entire sacrifice of national good faith.

Having now placed on record the opinions contained in that Report which was not fortunate enough to meet with the approbation of the Committee, with the addition of such observations as appeared necessary for the more complete illustration of my argument; I consider it due to others, as well as to myself, after the unfounded statements which have been circulated in some of the public journals, to add that the Report was drawn up without consulting any member of the Government, or any of those gentlemen with whom I had the honor of being associated in this protracted investigation.

To some of my agricultural constituents I fear it may give dissatisfaction, because it does not point out a specific remedy for existing distress. To others it may cause alarm because it proposes an alteration in those laws which have long been considered the key-stone of agricultural prosperity. But however my friends may differ from me on these points, I do not feel the less inclined to place my opinions before them, firmly believing them to be founded on just principles, and to a great

extent borne out by the evidence received before the Agricultural Committee.

In conclusion, I would recommend those persons who feel disposed to question the utility of an Enquiry which is said to have been productive of such barren results, to read with care and attention the evidence which has been collected. It is true that it contains nothing to flatter with delusive hope the farmer who has neither skill, energy, nor capital. But to one who takes the conduct of a farm, with a determination to apply to it those improvements, which the progress of science has extended to agriculture; and who, possessing industry and intelligence, has also the means by which alone they can be made available to him, the perusal of this evidence will afford abundant encouragement. Still greater benefit will be derived from the enquiry, if it does but convince any numerous class of agriculturists that the best thing which the legislature can do for them, is to free their trade from the shackles imposed upon it by impolitic laws—that the relief afforded by the new Poor Laws, and the Tithe Commutation Act, is the principal benefit which can be derived from Parliamentary interference—that any attempt to keep up artificially the price of agricultural produce, for any length of time, must lead to delusion and disappointment; that looking forward in future years to a moderate price of wheat, the farmer must regulate all his contracts accordingly, and instead of constantly appealing to the legislature for succour, he must rely upon his own industry, which, under Providence, will not fail him. But above all things, he must regard with suspicion any attempt, come from whatever